Misconceptions of the Word and Work of the Holy Spirit

J. N. Kildahl

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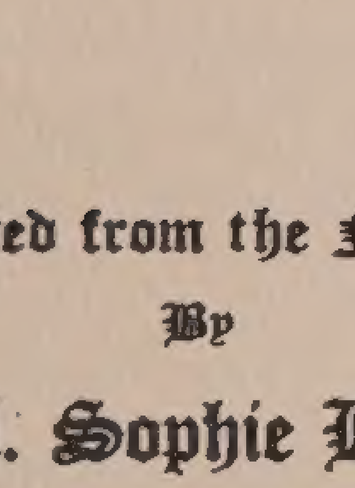
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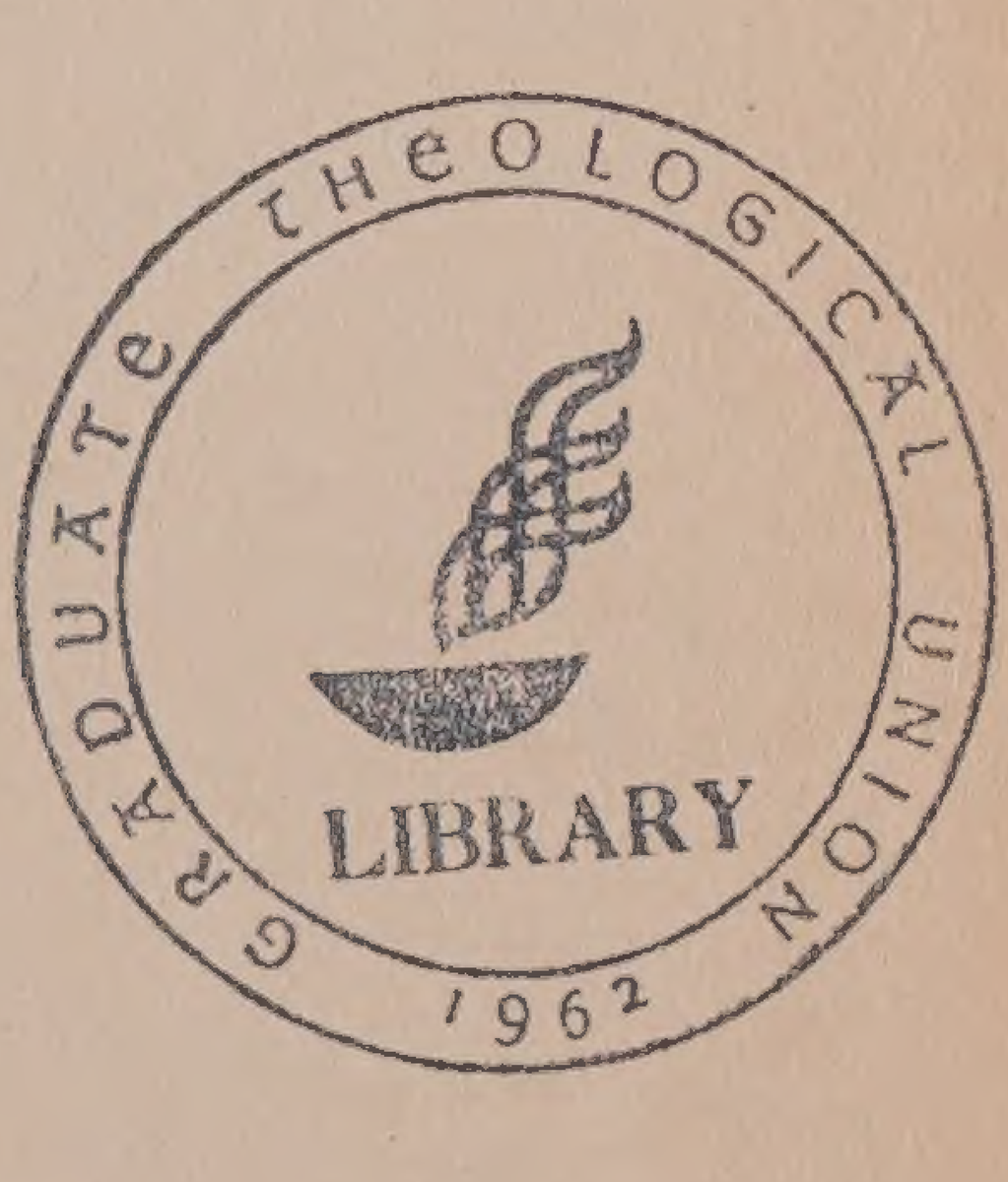
J. N. Kildahl

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FOREWORD

There is nothing on this earth which is so little understood and so greatly misunderstood as the words and works of the Holy Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he can not know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). It is really remarkable what a veil covers the eye of the natural man, so that he can neither see nor understand the very simplest things that pertain to the Spirit of God. And it matters not how clearly a matter is presented in the Word of God, so long as it is only the natural eye that reads, one will miss the Spirit's meaning. And it matters not how good a natural understanding or comprehension one may have, or how diligently and carefully one has been instructed in the Word of God from childhood, the message of the Spirit is nevertheless hidden, so long as one has not been born again.

In the following chapters we shall consider some of these misconceptions, while we pray to God that what is written may be a help and a blessing to some seeking soul.

I

Spiritual Awakening

If a worldly-minded person is to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary that he be awakened. In the Scriptures the natural condition of man is called a sleep. Therefore they say: "Awake, thou that *sleepest!*" So long as a person sleeps in sin, he is not conscious of his true condition, does not feel his sin, is not alarmed about the judgment of God, and does not seek salvation from sin and the judgment. So long as a person sleeps, he heeds not the call of God, but resists the grace offered him, and lives without Christ, and therefore without God. God does not lead sleeping sinners into heaven. An awakening is therefore absolutely necessary. God grant that this may be proclaimed round about in our churches, that sleeping sinners may awaken.

But what constitutes a spiritual awakening? How does a spiritual awakening manifest itself? How does it feel to be awakened, spiritually? There are many earnest, seeking souls who have a mistaken conception of what a spiritual awakening is, and who, because they do not understand the Holy Spirit's work upon their hearts, misunderstand their own experiences, and resist God's work of grace upon them. Where God's Word, the Law and the Gospel, is preached in its purity, there the Holy Spirit works constantly thru this Word of God to awaken those who are sleeping. And there are people who by hearing the Word of God, as it usually is preached in our churches, have become so influenced by the Word that they have begun to feel uneasy about their condition. God's Word has convinced them that all is not well with them, and they

go about wishing that their condition might be changed, that they might be converted and have the life with God. But they know that if this shall take place they must be spiritually awakened. And they go about waiting for this awakening; but it will not come. They have perhaps heard this or that person tell of his experiences when he was awakened, how he was so violently gripped that he almost lost his mind. When revival is mentioned they think of it as a mighty shake-up that is most apt to come suddenly while they are listening to the Word of God. They have heard of big revivals coming upon whole settlements and congregations, where many have been so violently seized by a terrible contrition and grief over sin that they well nigh despaired. And when they have no such experiences, they do not see how they can be converted and saved; for to them such experiences constitute a spiritual awakening, and must be the way to conversion and salvation.

Now, it must not be denied that many people have had such or similar stirring experiences. There are special seasons of visitation. And sometimes such violent revivals come to a community. One after another is mightily seized by the Word, as on the Day of Pentecost, and as has also occurred in our times, and in our congregations. But this is not the only way in which the Holy Spirit awakens people, and it can scarcely be said to be the most common way. We must rejoice and thank God when people are awakened, no matter how it happens. And we must guard against calling the Spirit's work fanaticism or madness. The fact is that big and violent revivals, as a rule, are attended by extreme demonstrations and errors bordering on fanaticism. But it is of vital importance to distinguish between the works of the Spirit and the imperfect works of man, the indiscreet and unsound things that so easily appear, and then wisely to lead the awakened souls, so that they, by God's grace, may

be kept from going astray, and may be helped to find the right way.

But, on the other hand, we must guard against wanting to dictate to the Holy Spirit certain methods by which He shall awaken and lead sinners to Christ. It is just this which characterizes the old-time Methodism, and whereby it has received its name, *Methodism.*

When God calls a man to repentance he ought not to go about waiting for something extraordinary to happen, as tho the ordinary call, the ordinary grace, and the ordinary power in the ordinary Word were not sufficient.

In order to realize what a spiritual awakening consists of it is necessary to have a right understanding of the purpose and aim of an awakening. The purpose and aim of a spiritual awakening is not to bring a sinner into a spiritual state with which God is so well pleased that He because of it is willing to receive the sinner, bestow upon him faith, and accept him as His child. This idea is, unfortunately, more or less deeply rooted in the minds of many. They do not believe that God can or will accept them into His grace just as they are. They think that a revival is required to produce a kind of intermediate state which God demands as a condition of being able to accept them into His grace. This is absolutely wrong and entirely at variance with the Gospel's teaching of salvation by grace thru Jesus Christ alone. The purpose and aim of a spiritual awakening is wholly and solely to bring a man to seek salvation and become willing to let God save him. God earnestly desires to save all men; but so long as a person sleeps in sin, that is, lives in perfect indifference in his natural state, God cannot save him, for God cannot save any except those who are willing to be saved. Therefore it is important that the sinner be awakened. When is he awakened? When he no longer is satisfied with his condition, can no longer live

unconcerned about the salvation of his soul, can no longer be at rest in his old life of sin, but longs to be converted. Then he is spiritually awakened.

This unrest and dissatisfaction with himself and his condition, this longing that a change may take place in him, this desire to have fellowship with God, this is all brought about by the Holy Spirit, and the purpose is to induce the sinner to desire to accept grace, and to permit the Lord to save him. And it is always the Word of God that brings this about. But it may well be that the sinner does not at all understand that just this feeling, this restlessness, this desire is the work of the Holy Spirit, the very awakening by the Holy Spirit. It may also be that the sinner does not realize that it is the Word of God which has brought this about; for it is not always possible to say at exactly what hour this unrest in the soul began. One cannot always state the hour and place when he began to think more seriously about these things. The impressions may have been made slowly and gradually. Nor is it always possible to name some certain Scripture passage that touched the conscience in a special sense and began the awakening. It may sometimes be the sum total of his knowledge of Scripture which he acquired away back in his childhood—it may be this Word of God which he possesses as a treasure of knowledge that began to work in his conscience perhaps occasioned by some event or circumstance in his life.

If a person desires to be converted and saved, then he is sufficiently awakened, for grace is free to all who want it and, as said before, a spiritual awakening is necessary to make us willing to accept grace, and not in order to induce God to give us His grace. It is a great sin for you to go about imagining that God will not receive you until you are more strongly and intensely awakened. It is unbelief that lies at the bottom of such thinking.

How intense must then the spiritual awakening be to be sufficient? Since, as has been said, the only aim and purpose of a spiritual awakening is to make the sinner willing to be saved, it is intense enough when the sinner is willing to let God save him. It must be so strong, at least, that a sinner no longer will or can find rest in sin and worldliness and uncertainty. It must be so strong that he cannot find rest in anything but the grace and salvation that are in Christ, and in the assurance in his heart that he has redemption, forgiveness of sins, in the blood of Christ. He who cannot be satisfied with anything less is spiritually awakened. He who has this need, this desire and this longing in his heart, he is spiritually awakened. How it came about that he felt such a need and longing, and how this desire is manifested, is of no consequence. The only thing of importance is this: Do you want to be saved? Do you desire this so earnestly that you cannot be satisfied with anything less?

Should you, dear reader, find your own case described here, then permit me to say to you: Do you wish to become a child of God? If you do, then do not go around waiting for any further awakening. Everything is ready. God is waiting for you. The way to God is open. Christ has opened it. "And he that is athirst, let him come: He that will, let him take the water of life freely."

II

The Knowledge of Sin

If a sinner is ever to feel the need of grace, and have use for Christ and His redemption, then he must become conscious of his sin, not because the knowledge of sin in itself is prerequisite for grace, or because a knowledge of sin can be exchanged for grace, but simply because "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." For even if a person knows ever so much about Christ; if he knows that it is by faith in Him that we are saved and made eternally happy, still his heart will not desire Christ, nor will he flee to Him unless he is grieved and troubled because he has learned to know his sin.

It is the Holy Spirit's work to bring a man to a knowledge of sin, and the means He uses is the Law. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). He becomes conscious of his sin when, thru the work of the Spirit his eyes are opened to see that his life and condition are in conflict with God's will as revealed in the Law.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, that is, He convinces people of that which is true. A man's realization of his liability to go astray is the beginning of wisdom. To get people to know and to understand their own liability to err is also the Holy Spirit's work. Therefore He tries first to convince them of the truth of their own condition. Satan, the god of this world, is seeking to blind the minds of the unbelieving. The heart, which is deceitful above all things, is also seeking to deceive us. So long, therefore, as a man follows the devil and his own heart, he will live in blindness and delusion. He will have a

false and mistaken opinion of himself and his own condition. Only by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit does a person learn to know the truth about himself. He, therefore, who has come to a knowledge of sin in the way only the Holy Spirit can bring people to a knowledge of sin, he will have a true and rightful knowledge of his own condition. That which he learns to see in his own heart is not something imaginary or unreal, but the pure, simple, naked, and unvarnished truth.

The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and that is the reason that the natural man does not understand the work of the Holy Spirit when He is trying to convince him of his sin. The works of the Holy Spirit are so often misunderstood.

The person who has grown up in a Lutheran congregation has learned that if he is to be converted it is absolutely necessary that he come to the knowledge of sin. If there is anything he has heard right from childhood and ever since, it is just this. If, therefore, such a person is spiritually awakened, that is, becomes concerned about the salvation of his soul, and begins to desire to be converted, then he will also desire to come to the knowledge of sin, for he knows that this is the way he must go to be saved. But it may well be that the Holy Spirit is striving to bring him to a thoro knowledge of his deep corruption and spiritual wretchedness, his great fall and utter depravity without his understanding that it is just this which he feels and experiences in his heart. He goes about hoping he may become truly humble, contrite, and penitent, but instead he feels so frightfully hard, and impenitent. He knows he ought to just melt away in a deep feeling of penitence, but instead he feels an alarming coldness and lack of earnestness. He knows he ought to pray with more intensity, but instead he notices he is not able to put any warmth or intensity into his prayers. He knows he ought seriously to pull himself

together, force his way to God, and take the Kingdom of Heaven unto himself by force; but instead he finds that he cannot get off the spot. He feels he is far away from God, and is not even able to begin with the first step of conversion, which, to be sure, ought to be remorse and contrition for sin. And because he cannot bring any of this to pass, it seems so impossible for him ever to be converted. How can he appear before God when he can in no wise feel a true and thoro consciousness of his sin?

Let us consider this more closely. If the knowledge of sin is to be real and true, then it seems that what one sees and feels within himself ought to correspond to the description found in the Word of God of the natural condition of a sinner. He who sees himself as the Lord in His Word has described the natural condition of the heart of man, surely he must have a real, true and thoro kowledge of his sin. But sin does not consist first and foremost of certain sinful deeds, words, and thoughts, but consists chiefly and particularly in an inward depravity, an utter lack of love for God, fear of God, and trust in God, and in its place a constant inclination to the things that conflict with the will and command of God. The natural man's condition is the direct opposite of what it ought to be, and, in addition, the natural man finds that he has not the slightest power or strength to change or correct this condition.

How is the natural man's heart described in the Word of God? It is described as a *heart of stone*. If therefore a man gets a true knowledge of his own heart, what kind of a heart does he find that he has? Does he find that his heart is humble, tender, and easily moved? Does he find that his heart just melts away in contrition, devotion, and submission to the will of God? No; that which he finds who permits the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to lead him to a krowledge of sin,—a true and correct knowledge of

his real condition,—that is a heart of stone. And indeed it is not strange if he finds and feels that a heart of stone is hard, cold, unyielding and not receptive. He who is distressed about his heart being so hard and cold and impenitent, he who complains that he cannot make his heart tender, warm, and humble, he has begun to see himself *just as he is,* and just as the Word of God says he is. He has therefore begun to acquire a *thoro* knowledge of his sin. But it is self-evident that such consciousness of sin is not a pleasant feeling, which one can enjoy, because he thinks now everything connected with his conversion is proceeding very well. But instead, it is a very unpleasant and disheartening feeling the result of which is that he does not know what to do.

The knowledge of sin may, it is true, begin by having one's eyes opened to certain definite sins, and by becoming distressed and terrified at them. But so long as the knowledge of sin stops at certain outward expressions of sin, so long is it a very superficial knowledge of sin. It is not thoro until it expresses itself as a feeling and understanding of the evil, hard, cold, perverted, godless, obstinate, deceitful, and unbelieving heart of stone, which is unwilling and incapable of doing anything good. It is when a person begins to examine this evil heart that he becomes really perplexed and puzzled. And when he begins to probe into this heart, and maybe, thru the convincing work of the good Spirit, gradually learns to know it more and more fully, then he feels anything but repentant, and then he believes anything but that he is coming to the knowledge of sin. The fact is, he had the mistaken idea that when God began His work in him he would feel and perceive something godly taking place in his heart; but when instead of this he only feels ungodly then he cannot believe that what he feels and perceives is the work of the Holy Spirit. Just so is the work of the Holy Spirit misunderstood. Neither

does he believe that he can begin to believe in Christ so long as he feels this way. Much persuasion is required before the sinner believes the blessed truth that God justifies the *ungodly*. There is nothing that to the natural man is so strange, remote, and hidden as this truth that we must be saved just as we are, or in other words, that we are saved by grace.

If there should be anyone reading this who is going about feeling how hard and wicked and ungodly he is inwardly, and who goes about waiting to become better before he can begin to believe, then let me say: Your condition will not be improved in all eternity so long as you will not begin to believe in Christ. If you are to be saved, then you must permit God to save you in your present wicked and ungodly condition. He never saves any other kind of people. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

III

The Work of the Law

He who has been brought up in a Lutheran congregation, who has been instructed in the Catechism, in childhood, who is confirmed, who has heard Christian sermons, he knows that the Law must do its work in a man's heart before he can believe in Christ. He knows it is the Law which the Holy Spirit uses to bring forth sorrow for sin, that the knowledge of sin comes by the Law, and that the Law is our tutor to bring us to Christ. That the Law must accomplish its work in the heart of a man who is to believe in Christ, this is quite true. But there are, unfortunately, many mistaken notions of *just what* the Law is to accomplish in the heart. Since the Law is good, then many are of the opinion that what is brought forth as a fruit of the work of the Law upon one, must also be good, yes, in fact they think it is so good and pleasing to God that it is just because of this that He is willing to accept them into His grace. It is, however, a big mistake to believe that the Law is capable of bringing forth anything good in the heart of an unconverted person.

When a man is spiritually awakened, that is, begins to reflect seriously, then he will no longer despise the Law, no longer have a deadly indifference for the Law. On the contrary, he will begin to understand that it is a serious matter to persist in living a sinful life, and he will begin to heed the will of God. A sure sign that he has become serious is that he has begun to strive to live according to the Law, that he has begun to exert himself to become as God wants him to be, both in his life and inwardly in his soul,

his heart, and his nature. And this, to be sure, is entirely right. But now, when he begins seriously to strive to obey the Law, what is the result? Will the result be that he really becomes better, more humble, more earnest, more tender, and more godly? That is what you might think. One should think that since the Law is good, and the sinner is now earnestly striving to become just as the Law demands he should be. then the result must be that he does become better. But if he believes this it is because he does not know himself, does not know how the natural man is constituted, does not know what the depravity of the natural man really is. No, on the contrary, the result is that he becomes worse. The result is that he not only *feels* worse, that sin becomes more abundant in his consciousness; but the result is that he really does become worse, that sin really does become more abundant. So evil and utterly corrupt is human nature that far from becoming more pious and worthy of esteem when the good and holy Law comes to him with its demands, it is, on the contrary, goaded on to become more wicked and more ungodly. That is, it is not the Law which causes the sin in the heart; for that which is good cannot be the cause of that which is evil. But it is sin or the evil nature in man which is goaded on by the Law, and which takes advantage of the commandment to work evil in the heart. This is clearly and distinctly taught in the 7th Chapter of Romans: "Sin finding occasion," says Paul, "wrought in me thru the commandment all manner of coveting: for apart from the Law, sin is dead. When the commandment came, sin revived, and the commandment which was unto life, this I found to be unto death: for sin, finding occasion, thru the commandment beguiled me, and thru it slew me. Did then that which is good (that is, the Law) become death unto me? God forbid! But sin, that it might be shown to be sin by working death to me thru that which is good; that

thru the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful." It is just this that so many to their great surprise and dismay discover when they are spiritually awakened. They have lived an ungodly life without being concerned about the will of God. Now they have become serious, they want to quit this godless life, they want to forsake the service of sin, and return to God. And therefore they begin by striving to heed God's will, comforming to His commands, and obeying Him. And then they discover that instead of becoming better, they are actually becoming worse. They can, it is true, desist from openly transgressing God's commands by swearing, swindling, and the like. But if they have been instructed in the Word of God they know that this is not enough. An inward change is required. This change, they think, is performed partly by the Law, and partly by the Gospel. First the Law must humble them, make them penitent and yielding, and then when the Law has accomplished this work and so made them "qualified for grace," then the Gospel will make them children of God, grant them faith, and lead them into a blessed fellowship with God. But their experience, as said before, is that by the help of the Law they do not seem to become more deserving of grace, more humble and worthy, but on the contrary, more sinful and unworthy. "I was alive apart from the Law once," says Paul in the aforementioned chapter of Romans, "but when the commandment came, sin revived." So long as one lives apart from the Law, does not heed it, is indifferent to it, one is scarcely aware of the depravity in one's own heart. It is just therefore that unconverted people can believe that they have a good heart, as we sometimes hear them say. But just let loose the Law with its holy demands on the heart, and then see what happens. Then the old Adam rises up. He cannot endure holiness pressing in upon him; he is provoked by the Law, and rises up to resistance. The wicked heart may be likened to

a vicious *evil tempered* dog. He may lie there quite still, and may seem ever so good-natured, and therefore seem quite harmless so long as no one comes too near; but if anyone approaches him, immediately the hairs on his back begin to bristle, and he shows his teeth. Just so is the natural man in reference to the Law. Therefore Paul says in the 8th Chapter of Romans that the Law "is weak thru the flesh." It is incapable of bringing forth anything good in the heart. It matters not how good the Law may be; that with which it is dealing is so evil and corrupt that just for this reason it becomes entirely powerless.

But if the foregoing is true, then we understand how useless it is to try with the help of the Law to be changed in a good way; and how impossible it is to bring forth in the heart anything godly and acceptable unto God by the help of the Law.

No, the work which the Law is to perform in the heart of a sinner before he can believe in Christ and accept His grace is of quite a different nature. The purpose of the Law is quite another. What is it then that the Law must accomplish in us before we can accept His grace? Let us remember that God never offers His grace to anyone on certain conditions. That would be contrary to the nature and character of grace. Grace is absolutely free. He who wants grace gets it. But there is only one class of people who will let themselves be prevailed upon by God to accept His grace. These are they who will let themselves be convinced by the Word of God that if they are ever to be saved, then they must be saved as *ungodly* persons, and not as they who may have been ungodly, but who now, by God's help, have become a little better so God can therefore accept them into His grace. The office of the Law is therefore to *shut our mouths* and make us *guilty before God* (Rom. 3:19). The work of the Law is, in other words, to convince us so thoroly of our utter depravity, incapacity, lack of power, and

spiritual death that we have nothing more to say, either as an excuse or in our defence, so that we stand before Him fully and wholly acknowledging and confessing ourselves guilty before God. The work of the Law is to make us so bankrupt and destitute, so hopeless and perplexed that we entirely give up the thought and hope that our condition can and shall be improved before God can accept us into His grace. It is the purpose and work of the Law to make us lost and condemned sinners, who are absolutely incapable of doing anything, who can see only this one thing, namely, that we are sinners and nothing but sinners. Not till then is it possible to teach anyone what it means to be *saved by grace,* and not till then is one willing to be saved in the only way that God saves sinners, and which, after all, is the only possible way by which sinners can be saved, namely, by grace.

There is nothing so humiliating and so hard for our proud and self-righteous natures as just this. But if only the Law with its inexorable demands for holiness and perfection is let loose upon us, if we but begin to take the words of the Law in real earnest, then will the Law crush our pride, and so thoroly lash and beat us that we begin to plead for grace, only grace, grace. Then we are saved, then we are saved by grace.

IV

Works of the Law

"By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20). If there is anything which our Norwegian Lutheran church people have heard, it is this. And if there is anything that our Norwegian Lutheran church people look upon as divine truth, it is this. But if there is anything which no unconverted person understands, it is just this. And if there is anything which every single grown person who has been spiritually awakened will try, it is to be justified by the works of the Law.

The natural man does not apprehend the things of the Spirit of God. The natural man's religion is that one is accepted into grace by God because of what he himself is or does. And so long as he is only a natural man, that is, so long as he is not born of God, then he has the natural religion. He thinks according to the nature and principles of the natural religion. That he has acquired a historical knowledge of Christianity does not alter the case. The only difference is that he who has been instructed in the Word of God uses Christian words and expressions, but puts into these words and expressions the meaning of the natural religion. He therefore misunderstands the words of the Holy Spirit, and consequently misunderstands the works of the Holy Spirit as well. The fact that he has learned by heart that man is justified alone by faith in Christ, and admits this to be true, does not alter the case; for he does not understand what these words mean, in fact, cannot understand them; for they are spiritually discerned, and this fundamental condition

for understanding the essentials of Christianity is lacking in one who is not born of God.

Therefore it matters not what an unconverted person professes and thinks he believes, the only religion which he understands, and which therefore he has, is the religion of the works of the Law. This, of course, he will not admit, but insists, very emphatically maybe, that he believes what Paul teaches concerning this matter—until he himself is converted; then he will see that he never before had understood what it means to be justified by faith.

He who has been brought up in a Lutheran congregation understands that one who has transgressed God's commands and has lived a life in sin away from the Lord will not be justified and saved by doing some outward works, such as donating money to the Church, being charitable to the poor, etc. He knows that Christianity is of a more spiritual nature. Consequently He is not living in the grossest form of work-righteousness. And yet all experience shows us that all unconverted persons, so far as their struggles to win God's favor are concerned, are in the toils of self-righteousness. This is clearly brought to light when they are spiritually awakened.

What is it that people who have been awakened to a solicitude for the salvation of their souls first think of and first strive to do? Is it to believe in Christ? Believe in Christ—at the very start? No, something else is required first, they think. They hope, however, to come to that some day; but they have not yet reached that point in the regular way of salvation. So they continue with the works of the Law so that by means of them they may arrive at a point where they can begin to believe. They themselves do not believe that they are struggling with the works of the Law, but that is the case, nevertheless. Let one who has been awakened from his sleep in sin open his heart and tell us just what he is troubled about; what kind

of thoughts he harbors in his heart; what burden is oppressing him, and we shall see that it is the heavy service of the Law which self-righteousness dictates with which he is struggling as best he can. He has been disturbed in his life of sin, he sees that things will go to the bad if he continues in the old way; there must be a change; he will return to God and become His child. But he cannot make it work. He is growing worse rather than better, in fact, he seems to be going backward rather than forward to God. And he sighs: "Oh, if only I could become truly earnest; if only I could pray with more fervor; if only I could truly humble myself before God so He could exalt me! If only I were not so cold, so hard, so impenitent!"

But, my dear friend, do you not believe that a person is justified and saved by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law? Yes, of course I believe that, —but—yes, but if you believe that, why are you so concerned about all these other things you mentioned? Concerned? Why, doesn't God require them of us? Must we not become truly earnest, must we not humble ourselves before God if we are to be exalted by Him?

What is implied in this apparently reasonable talk? *There is this in it that the sinner first wants to find something in himself which he, at any rate, can find a little comfort in before he thinks he is permitted to find comfort in Jesus and what He has done.* Isn't it true, it wouldn't be quite so discouraging as it now is if he only could find in his own heart that which he is trying so hard to work up in there? And that in which he is trying to find comfort is the assurance that inwardly, in his own soul and own heart, he is so constituted that God can find enough pleasure in him so that He can begin to convert him. He tries to find comfort in the assurance that God no longer looks upon him as one who only is hard, cold, obstinate, and impenitent, but as one who is "fitted to be pardoned."

But isn't it just such an inward condition that the

first commandment of the Law requires of us? What, therefore, you are striving to do, these are works of the Law; they are the inward works which are required in the first commandment. You think you must have these works. And what do you want of them? Well, you want to display them, as it were, before God, and then you would think: Surely now God will find enough pleasure in me so that He will be willing to grant me faith, regenerate me, and accept me as His child. Don't you understand that this is not seeking salvation *alone* by faith in Jesus, but is clinging to the works of the Law? You think that you do not want to reject Christ and the doctrine of salvation by faith in Him; but that which you really want, whether you understand it or not, is to be saved partly by the works of the Law and partly by faith in Christ. You hope that the works of the Law will get you part way, and then God is to meet you there with Christ and lead you the rest of the way to Heaven. By your works of the Law you are to become prepared and "fitted to receive faith," and then by faith you will receive salvation, you think.

The fact is that by works of the Law is meant all that a person does or is in harmony with the Law. By works of the Law is meant not only outward works, but also, and chiefly, such an inward condition of the heart as harmonizes with the first commandment. And this state, you think, God demands as a condition for grace. It is just this that is wrong.

For God never trades His grace for anything He finds in the heart of man, whether one thinks of this as something which man has brought about by his own strength, or has cultivated in his heart by God's help, or as something which God alone without our help has created and brought forth. Grace is only *given* away, and grace is given only to those who are ungodly, unworthy, and lost. For "if it is by grace, it is no more of works: *otherwise grace is no more grace*" (Rom.

11:6). So long as a person imagines that there is something which must be worked up in the heart, which God requires as a condition for giving grace, just so long does he hold fast to the Law, continues with works of the Law, lies bound in self-righteousness and work-righteousness, resists grace and the Gospel, and hinders the Holy Spirit from doing His work in his heart.

Therefore no one is converted to God before his own self-made conversion goes entirely to pieces, and he stands before God naked and unclothed; for no flesh shall be justified by works of the Law, neither by inward nor by outward works of the Law; neither by works according to the second table of the Law, nor by works according to the first table; neither by anything which one does, nor by anything which one is, consequently not by any condition to be found in the heart or soul. For that gate is narrow; it is so narrow that no man carrying a pack can get thru it; it is so narrow that the only way to get thru it is to be entirely unclothed. All that a man is striving to do as something he thinks ought to belong to a true conversion, and which he thinks God demands,—these things are works of the Law. So long as he doesn't believe that God accepts him into His grace as poor, miserable, ungodly, and lost—as he is, just so long is he clinging to the works of the Law.

And then, since there is no power or ability in the soul to do any of the works of the Law, before faith is kindled in the heart, or in any way to bring forth something pleasing to God, then all such work is entirely in vain, and brings no one a hair's breadth nearer to God. The corruption of the soul is so great, the incapacity is so complete, that it is just this which one is incapable of doing. There will be absolutely nothing else than death and damnation in such work; for as many as are of the works of the Law, are under a curse (Gal. 3:10).

The only way to escape the curse is to believe that Scripture tells the truth when it says that "to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

V

The Gospel

The natural man understands *something* about the Law, but absolutely nothing about the Gospel. The Gospel is the big mystery, which has never entered into the heart of man, and which no natural man has or ever can have any conception of. The Gospel is something which is peculiar to the Christian religion. Law is found in all religions; but Christianity is the only religion in the world which contains anything like the Gospel. If all the wise men of the world had together racked their brains they would never have thought of anything like the Gospel. There is nothing which is so strange and remote from the thoughts of the natural man as the Gospel. This is not because the Gospel in itself is so intricate, lofty, or difficult to understand. Nothing is more simple and straight-forward than the Gospel, and many a one who had for a long time been fumbling in the dark, was, when his eyes were opened, quite surprised that it was so simple, and that he had not seen this before. But this is because the Gospel lies in a sphere which the natural man with his understanding cannot reach. The fact is, the natural man is blind to the things concerning the Spirit of God, and he that is blind sees not, as we all know, even the things that are clear as noon-day. Even if the Gospel is preached, yes, explained ever so clearly and distinctly, and if he to whom it is explained has ever so keen a mind, and ever so good an apprehension, still he does not understand the Gospel before God has opened his eye in the new birth. Therefore the Gospel is to the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks

foolishness. And it is, as before said, a hidden mystery to all natural men.

People who have learned the Lutheran Catechism, know that it is correct teaching to say that man is saved not by the Law but by the Gospel. But if a person has been instructed ever so well, it matters not, he nevertheless does not understand what the Gospel is, and therefore not what it means to be saved by the Gospel.

All unregenerate persons make the Gospel over into Law. The only thing they do understand somewhat is the Law, and when they hear the Gospel and think of the Gospel they think of it in terms of the Law. The Law is so deeply-rooted in their heads and hearts that they cannot get away from that. The characteristic thing about the Law is that it promises eternal life on certain conditions which we must meet. The characteristic thing about the Gospel is that it promises eternal life as a free gift of grace. But when the natural man begins to concern himself with the Gospel, then he brings that which is characteristic of the Law along into his reflections about the Gospel. All natural persons, that is, all unregenerate persons, look upon the Gospel as something that promises eternal life on certain conditions. When, therefore, God the Holy Spirit calls them by the Gospel, and thru the Gospel offers them free grace, they do not understand the language of the Holy Spirit; and when the Holy Spirit is trying to create faith in their hearts, they misunderstand His work, resist His operations, and so hinder the birth of the new life in their hearts. People who have been spiritually awakened and who earnestly desire to be converted, are not aware of the fact that they do not understand what the Gospel is, and that they are resisting the work of grace in their hearts; but this is, nevertheless, the case so long as they are not willing to believe.

There are only two conceivable ways of coming to God, the one by the Law, and the other by the Gospel. The way of the Law is: "Do this, and thou shalt live." The Gospel says: "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." And faith is the *first* step on the way of the Gospel. Faith is not something to which the Gospel eventually leads after it has performed a great deal of preparatory work in the heart. One must *begin* by believing. The fact is, the Gospel is not an offer of grace, salvation, forgiveness, and sonship on certain conditions which, "by God's help," we are to fulfill. It does not require as a stipulation for grace any state or condition in the one to whom it comes. It is the Law which is engaged in such work. But the Gospel is simply an historical account of what God has done in and thru Christ, a story of what took place in Judea nineteen hundred years ago. It is simply an account which shows that we are a redeemed people. It tells of something which is true, and therefore must be believed. And this same Gospel tells us that he who now believes this which is proclaimed in the Gospel shall receive the forgiveness of sins and shall be saved. There is absolutely no condition of any kind, no demands or requirements as to the condition of the heart or of the soul in those to whom these free tidings come. The Gospel only relates an historical fact and says: Believe this, and you shall be saved.

How often has not a pastor had this experience when he has tried to lead spiritually awakened people to Christ, that all their thoughts were turned to the condition of their own hearts, and that he could not get them to look to Christ and His atonement. He sits there and tries as best he can to hold the crucified Christ before the troubled sinner, and he tries as simply and clearly as possible to explain to him that Christ has redeemed him, that all things are ready, and that he only has to believe in Jesus. And the poor, perplexed sinner sits there staring into space without un-

derstanding, and answers to all he says: "Yes, I believe all that, but, but, but." And what, then, is this "but" which is always obscuring the cross of Christ so that a person cannot see himself as a saved sinner? It is that I, I, I am not what I ought to be. What does this show? It shows that he does not yet at all understand what the Gospel is. He is bound by the Law. It is the Law which is always telling of how I ought to be. The Gospel never speaks of how I, I, I ought to be. It tells only of Him, *Him, HIM*. It says: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" Oh, if only the Gospel could persuade you to look away from yourself, both from your sin and your hard, wicked heart, and from what you hope by God's help to accomplish, and only look at Jesus, and only listen to what He has done! Then would the day-star arise in your heart, and you would sing praises to God for the salvation you found fully prepared in Christ.

But is not a preparation of the heart required before the Gospel can do this work in us? Ans.: So long as a person lives in levity, thoughtlessness, and impenitence, and only seeks the things of this world, then he cares nothing for the grace which is freely offered in the Gospel. Therefore God must by means of the Law bring about such a condition in the heart that he feels it is hard to be a sinner, and that he desires to get out of this state, and desires to be saved. They who are well need not a physician, but only they who are sick. What preparation is required before seeking a doctor? This preparation is required, that one feels that he needs medical attention. So it is here. He who feels that he is a sinner, he who understands that it is no joke to have transgressed God's commands, he who therefore earnestly desires to find grace and salvation,—for such a one there is grace; "for the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to *all* men," and there is no conditional clause in the Gospel. Those

who are sent out to invite to the feast of grace have received the instruction that they shall say to everyone, as many as they find: "Come, for all things are now ready." And on the last page of the Bible is written: "And he that is athirst let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life *freely*." No preparation of the heart is required to induce God to give us His grace; for as previously stated, grace is something which one cannot get by bartering any kind of preparation whatsoever for it. It is only given away to the unworthy; but often a great deal of preparation is required to induce us to accept that grace which in the Gospel is offered us entirely without price and unconditionally. Enough preparation is required to make us so utterly destitute, bankrupt, and perplexed that we at last are willing to be saved just as we are. A preparation is therefore required not for God's sake but for our sake. If one desires to escape from sin, desires to be converted, desires grace, and desires God to have mercy on him, then he is sufficiently prepared. The longer he waits before he is willing to accept grace, the more miserable will he become.

We have accounts in the Gospels of people who were different in some respects; but all were alike in this that they were in trouble and needed help; and that they had heard that Jesus could and would help them, and that they in their helplessness came to Him. Do we read in a single instance of Jesus saying to any of them: "Yes, there is enough grace and help and salvation to be had with me, but you are coming too soon; you are not earnest enough; not penitent enough, not contrite enough; you must first go home and bring about a more thoro penitence and preparation; then you can come back again, and we shall see what can be done?" No, it has never happened and it never will happen. He received all who came; they were so heartily welcomed. And He says: "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This is Gospel.

VI

Saved By Grace

That we are saved by grace and not by anything we have deserved, this is so impressed on the minds of our Lutheran people from childhood that even the least enlightened know it. And still experience shows us that even the most enlightened persons simply do not understand what it means to be saved by grace, so long as they still are natural men.

This is confirmed again and again whenever a person is awakened to anxiety for the salvation of his soul and begins to think of turning to God. In spite of the fact that he knows so well, and thinks he believes, that if he is to be saved he must be saved by grace, still there is nothing which gives God the Holy Spirit so much trouble as to induce a man to let himself be saved by grace. He thinks he wants to be saved by grace, but strives as hard as he can to be saved by that which he himself brings about, and for this reason resists and withstands the Spirit's work in the heart, and so hinders his own conversion. When there is talk of resisting the Holy Spirit most people think of a person refusing to listen to His gracious call and continuing in his ungodly life. Yes, this is, to be sure, resisting the Holy Spirit. And there are, alas, altogether too many who do this. But there are also many who have been spiritually awakened who continue to resist the Holy Spirit in that they resist the Gospel's free offer, not permitting God to accept them into His grace as ungodly; they think that it belongs to the regular course of grace that before they can be accepted by God into His grace they must become inwardly changed.

They believe, as before mentioned, that they cannot save themselves, that they cannot convert themselves, that they cannot remake themselves, that they cannot do anything to deserve salvation, but that everything must come from God, that, consequently, they must be saved by grace. And therefore they continually pray and implore God to *help* them, and they hope and wait for Him to *help* them. They hope that God will help them to become truly penitent, prepared, "worthy to receive faith," "worthy of grace." And this, to be so *helped* by God, is, they think, to be saved by grace. In this way one can, to a certain extent at any rate, save his own honor, in that he himself can have a hand in it; and, after all, it is he himself who has brought about his own conversion and salvation, but of course, "with God's help." But if everything takes its true course he cannot save his own honor, for all have sinned—sinned to the degree that they have fallen short of the glory of God. And he will never be saved in the only way that God saves people before his own conversion, which he is trying to bring about, "with God's help," goes so entirely to pieces that his mouth is stopped, and he goes bankrupt.

Christ says: "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Yes, say some, this is just what we think, and therefore we must have His help, for "With might of ours can naught be done."

But the whole connection shows that when Jesus says: "Without me ye can do nothing," then He does not mean: "Without my help ye can do nothing," but he means: "Except ye abide in the fellowship of My life ye can do nothing." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, *except it abide in the vine;* so neither can ye except ye abide in me." To be able to do anything we must be in the same relation to Jesus as the branch that bears fruit is to the vine, that is, in a living, organic connection with the vine. This is so clear-

ly stated in the American revised version where it says: "*Apart* from me ye can do nothing."

There are only two conceivable ways by which a man can be saved. The one is by the Law, and the other is by the Gospel. We have seen that by the Law nothing good and acceptable unto God can be produced in an unregenerate person, not because the Law is not good, but because the nature of man is so corrupt that far from becoming better by the demands of the Law, it, on the contrary, takes advantage of the Law to become worse. The Law is therefore weak thru the flesh, as Paul teaches in the 8th Chapter of Romans. But cannot God help an awakened sinner by the Gospel? Yes, He can if the sinner will permit God to rule, and let the help come in the only way in which the Gospel helps sinners. But God's help, by means of the Gospel, does not consist in the Gospel gradually improving the unregenerate person so that he becomes more and more pleasing in the sight of God, and at last is so acceptable that He can grant him faith and accept him as His child. The Gospel brings help in quite a different way. As already stated, the Gospel is simply an account telling us that Jesus Christ has fulfilled God's Law in our place, that He has atoned, suffered, and paid for all our sins, that the righteousness of God is satisfied, and that God in Christ has reconciled the world unto Himself. The Gospel tells us that we are redeemed by what Jesus has done, and that what Jesus so has done is enough for all sinners. Absolutely nothing more is needed. And the Gospel invites all men to come and receive this salvation, and it says we shall get it entirely free, without money and without price, without worthiness and without merit. He that is athirst, let him but come, and he that will may take the water of life freely. Or to express it in a different way: The Gospel invites us to believe the message which it brings of salvation thru Christ and it assures us that he that

believes shall be justified, he shall receive the forgiveness of sins, he shall be saved. And the Gospel is striving to create this faith, and without man's help the Gospel will create faith in all them who do not stubbornly oppose it. This is grace, this is to be saved by grace, this is to be saved by God. The first thing, therefore, which must be cultivated and created in a person who is to be saved by grace, this is faith. As already stated, the Gospel does not gradually make an unregenerate person a little better and better until at last it does this for him that it brings forth faith in the heart. Before faith comes there is nothing which the Gospel can take hold of and begin to improve; for the old Adam cannot be improved. The only thing which must be done to it is to slay and drown it after faith has taken up its abode in the heart. From this we can see what a useless piece of work it is to try to induce God to help us to become "fit for grace" or "prepared to receive faith." The only way in which anything pleasing and acceptable in God's sight can get into a person's heart is by God Himself creating something entirely new in there. And what God is always striving to create, and which He by the Gospel's inherent power always does create where the work of His Spirit is not resisted, this is faith. And the person in whom God is permitted to create faith, that person is saved by grace. If you, too, dear reader, desire to be saved by grace, then believe the Gospel when you hear it. Everything you are trying to do to become more prepared to begin believing, whether you intend to bring about this preparedness by your own power or by God's help, all this is resistance to grace and the Gospel, and thereby your conversion and salvation are made impossible. Therefore, stop this striving and believe the Gospel. Look away from yourself and look to the Lamb of God that beareth the sins of the world. You will never be comforted so long as your eye is turned inward upon yourself, for you will

find nothing there which can comfort you. And you will never become better so long as you strive to improve your heart. It cannot be improved. The only way to find comfort is by looking to Jesus. The only way to find salvation is that you as a lost sinner believe the gospel message of the atonement of Jesus. Therefore, move out of yourself, and move into Christ.

VII

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion

If we are to be saved it is not enough to know that Christ has done a work *for* us; the Holy Spirit must also be permitted to do a work *in* us. How often has not this truth been heard from our Lutheran pulpits! So our people know this by heart, and it is well that they do know it. One may have lived for years without having been specially concerned either about the work of Christ or the work of the Holy Spirit; but one may be aroused to serious reflection, and then it is well to know that it is necessary that the Holy Spirit be permitted to do His work in the heart.

The sinner knows therefore that it is entirely necessary that the Holy Spirit be permitted to do a work in us; but precisely wherein this work of the Holy Spirit consists, or in other words, just what the Holy Spirit is to accomplish in his heart—well, about this he very often has only an indistinct and hazy conception. He knows that the Holy Spirit will produce something which is good, something from God; but just what this is,—well, that he really does not know. And that is just the reason that he does not understand the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, misunderstands His office, and so hinders His gracious operations. Since it is the Spirit of God which does this work in the sinner's heart, this work must be something good, something spiritual, something holy, something godly. The sinner who has been awakened to serious reflection, knows that he is evil, carnal, unholy and ungodly. What he longs for is to feel that he is becoming different in this respect. To be permitted to know, feel, and be conscious of the work of the Spirit, which

means in his opinion to be permitted to feel how he is becoming spiritual, holy, and godly, that would be very delightful. And so he goes about waiting to see, as it were, the work of the Holy Spirit. He wants to know and feel how the Holy Spirit removes that which is wicked, carnal, and unholy from the heart, and replaces it with something good, spiritual, godly, holy, and acceptable unto God, so that he himself can, so to speak, keep pace with the change and improvement. And then he doesn't feel that any such improvement is taking place in him. On the contrary, as before indicated, he only feels worse and more ungodly, and thinks that his case looks more and more hopeless. And when he experiences no such improvement within himself, then he thinks that the Holy Spirit is not at all working in him. And still the Holy Spirit is all this time continuing His blessed work. But because the sinner does not understand the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore he misunderstands both what the Holy Spirit already has accomplished in him, as well as what the Holy Spirit is still striving to bring about in his heart.

What, then, is the Holy Spirit's work in conversion? To begin with, the Holy Spirit's work is to make the sinner feel and know that he is ungodly, sinful, and corrupt. It is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit that the sinner has begun to think seriously about his relation to God, that he is anxious about his soul's salvation, that he is dissatisfied with his condition, that he is without peace and without comfort, that his own improvement and conversion have proved such an utter failure, that he is perplexed and embarrassed about it, and that in spite of all his attempts at improvement he sees himself hopelessly lost. All this the Holy Spirit has accomplished in his heart. It is the Holy Spirit who has awakened him to serious meditation and reflection; it is the Holy Spirit who shows him how utterly ungodly, wicked, and thoroly corrupt he is; it

is the Holy Spirit that persists in convincing him how utterly powerless and incapable he is to correct the wickedness which is in his heart; it is the Holy Spirit who continues to teach him that the corruption in him is so great and so complete that he cannot be improved, cannot gradually become godlier, more spiritual and pleasing unto God. All this is the Spirit's work. But it is self-evident that this work of the Spirit is not of such a nature that he who is the object of this work can feel that anything good and godly is about to come forth in his soul.

But why does the Holy Spirit strive to make him so miserable, so dejected, and so forlorn? Because they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. And the Holy Spirit desires so earnestly that the poor sinner should come to the Physician, to the only One who can help and save him, namely, to the Lord Jesus Christ. When, therefore, the Holy Spirit makes the sinner so despondent and dejected, yes, utterly lost, then it is because it is only a needed preparatory work for that which is the Holy Spirit's proper work in conversion, namely, to declare Christ to the sinner.

We have said that many spiritually awakened souls are striving to see and feel the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. However, they are not to be saved by seeing the Holy Spirit, but by seeing Christ; and this that a sinner does see Christ, this is the Holy Spirit's work. It is therefore not important to the Holy Spirit to present Himself, to show Himself. No, there is Another Whom the Holy Spirit wants to present, to bring forward, and that is Christ. Before Christ left this world with His visible presence He said to His disciples that He, after His departure, would send them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, and when He comes, said Jesus, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of mine, and declare it unto you." "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is

given among men," whereby anyone can be saved, except the name of Jesus Christ. And Jesus has taught us that this is life eternal that we know the only true God and Him whom He hath sent, namely, Jesus Christ. In Jesus the sinner must find his whole salvation; in Him he must find all that he lacks; in Jesus he must find all that which he in vain has sought to find in his own heart, and which he in vain has tried "by God's help" to bring about in himself; in Jesus he must find all that which he had thought the Holy Spirit should bring forth in his own soul. To show him, to get him to understand and to persuade him to believe that all this is in Christ, this is the Holy Spirit's work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to persuade the sinner to look away from himself and his attempts at improvement, and to look to Jesus only; it is the Holy Spirit's work to create the belief in the heart of the sinner that he is acceptable to God solely because Christ has redeemed him; it is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce in the heart of a sinner that confidence in God that God will accept him, make him His child and forgive him all his sins solely for the reason that Jesus has died for him; it is the work of the Holy Spirit to persuade the sinner to believe that he is saved by grace only. And when the sinner believes this then the work of the Holy Spirit is being acccomplished in him. It may well be that he is not conscious that the Holy Spirit is doing His work in him. The Holy Spirit does His work just the same regardless of whether man knows it is the Holy Spirit's work which is now being done and regardless of whether the Holy Spirit receives any credit for His work or not—if only Christ receives thanks for His work.

But does not the Holy Spirit effect such a change in the heart of a sinner that he is conscious of having become a new creature, that the old things are passed away, and all things have become new? Does

not a noticeable change take place as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit so that a person really becomes more godly, spiritual, and holy? So that a person knows that he loves God and everything godly, and so that he really begins to hate sin and get power over it? Yes, that is certainly true: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). What does this Word of God say? It says: *"If any man is in Christ,"* then he is a new creature. It does not say that the Holy Spirit is gradually making him a new creature until He finally gets him so renewed that He can bring him into Christ. No, he must come into Christ as an ungodly creature; he must begin by believing in Christ, and *then* he becomes a new creature. No matter how difficult this often seems to be for troubled souls, it is nevertheless the *only* way to life. "To him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth *the ungodly,* his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). In the 31st chapter of Jeremiah the Lord explains how it comes about that such a change takes place in the hearts of people that find delight in the Law of God and get a willingness to do His will. He says in the 33rd verse: "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it." And then he says, in the next verse: *"For* I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." The fact that their sins have been forgiven, that explains why such a change has taken place in their hearts. Jesus taught this also when the sinful woman stood at His feet and wept. He said: *"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;* for she loved much." First believe, believe as one who is unworthy, as one who is ungodly, then the change will come as a fruit thereof.

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VIII

Faith

As far back as we can remember that we have had any knowledge of Christianity we have known that we are justified and saved by faith. This we have, so to speak, imbibed with the mother's milk. It has been told us in almost every sermon we have heard. So if there is anything we Lutherans ought to know, it is this. And if these things could be learned by using our natural faculties, then we should all have learned and understood them. But it is apparent here, too, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. One can, it is true, learn to use the right words to express the sound doctrine; but to learn to understand what the words really mean, this one cannot before God has performed the miracle in him of opening his blind eyes so that he can see.

What really is faith? Well, on this question many people have a very vague and indistinct conception; but so much do they at any rate think they know about faith that it is a kind of feeling in the heart, a feeling which causes the fear of God's wrath and punishment to be taken away, and makes them feel secure. Just why fear should disappear, and just why they should feel calm and secure, this may be they do not know; but they have learned that it is a gift from God, a grace of God. They go about longing for this feeling, and when it does not come, then as a consequence they feel insecure and fearful. This error that faith is a feeling has caused much harm. Now it—no doubt—is true that where there is faith there is also a variety of feelings. Christianity is not a religion devoid of feeling. Christianity rises just in this particular

above all other religions, as Christianity is the only religion which gives peace to the heart of man, and makes him happy and blessed. In the heart of a believer there is a feeling both of sin and of grace, both of doubt and of trust, both of fear and of hope, both of sorrow and of joy. But faith is not the same as feeling. The Scriptures say that faith is "a conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It is a conviction of something which cannot be grasped by any of the human senses. But faith can no more feel the things it is convinced of than it can see them. It is indeed true that faith is something in the heart which makes the fear of God's wrath and punishment disappear, and makes one feel secure. Faith is convinced of God's grace and friendship, and such a conviction is incompatible with fear of God's wrath and punishment. Therefore we read in the Epistle to the Romans that we being justified by faith have peace with God. But this feeling of security and peace is not founded on any elusive feeling which one may have in the heart. It is founded upon a conviction of truth, a fact about which God has given information and enlightenment.

What is this truth, this fact of which faith is a conviction? It is a truth and a fact about which the Word of God tells us. Faith rests, therefore, not on something which I find in my own heart. Faith is not directed to something which exists within myself. Faith rests on the Word of God. Faith is directed to something which the Gospel holds forth. Faith is directed not inwardly, but outwardly. Faith is the Holy Spirit's work in the heart, and this work of the Holy Spirit which is going on in the heart consists in this: the heart is not concerned with itself, but with something which is outside of it, not with something which is now taking place inside one's own soul, but with something which took place nineteen hundred years ago. Therefore faith can be a firm conviction, and not

an uncertain supposition, not a "hope" that something may possibly be so and so.

What is it then that faith believes? It believes the testimony which God has given about His Son; it believes the Gospel; it believes in Jesus, who has redeemed us. It believes that He has fulfilled God's Law in our place; that He has suffered for all our sins, and that He has in this way acquired for us God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, sonship, life, and eternal salvation. Yes, but Jesus has done this for all men, has He not? Yes, of course He has. Isn't it just that which is so grand and joyful? Isn't it just because of this that I can be sure that He has also redeemed me, atoned for my sins, obtained forgiveness of sins, sonship, life, and salvation also for me? But must I not believe something special about myself? Isn't it true that in spite of the fact that Christ has redeemed all men, not all are under grace? It is necessary, is it not, that I personally come into such a state that I no longer am under wrath and condemnation? Alas, in this way many a poor, blinded sinner continues to struggle against grace, and to bring objection against the Gospel and the beloved Savior who in the Gospel stands with outstretched arms of grace to receive him! No, you are not at all to believe anything special about yourself. You are not so important or select a person that it is necessary to do something extra to save you. You are only an ordinary sinner like all the others about whom it is said that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God"; and that they are "justified freely by His grace thru the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-24). You are included in this "all," both in respect to sin and in respect to salvation. It is just this that is the great fault of so many that they will not place themselves in the same class with all other sinners, and will not believe that what God has found to be enough for the whole world is also enough for

them. God once said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee," and if God believes that it is enough, and if it was enough for Paul, should it not then be enough for you, too? It is, to be sure, true that altho Christ has redeemed all men, still not all are under grace. And why are they outside of grace? Because they do not believe in the grace which is for all.

What is it that shuts people out from God and salvation? It is sin in all its extent and in all its forms. It is this that one does not love, fear, and trust in God. It is that the heart is constantly inclined to evil, that there are evil lusts and desires in the heart. Now, what has Christ done to save us from all this sin? He became the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and therefore also your sin. He bore our sins in His body upon the tree. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. He suffered the punishment that all had deserved. He atoned for sin, and thus earned forgiveness of sins for all, also for you. Now, isn't that enough? What more could be done for you? It is what Christ has done for all that faith believes. It is nothing else. It is this faith clings to, depends on, rests on, builds on, places its trust in, finds its only comfort in. And it is when one believes this that a feeling of security and peace comes into the heart, as a fruit and result of believing the Gospel. We do not build on our faith, but on Christ. We feel so safe and confident, not because we find a faith in our hearts which is such that we can be satisfied with it, but because our faith has obtained an insight into the atonement of Christ, and because faith finds in the atonement that with which God has declared Himself to be satisfied. We do not occupy ourselves with our faith, but our faith occupies itself with Christ, finds all that it lacks and all that it needs in Him. Therefore Paul said he did not know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And so it is with every one

who believes. Everyone who is spiritually awakened and converted as an adult has many and various kinds of experiences; but it is not because of these experiences that he believes himself to be saved. It is not his contrition, not his penitence, it is not his conversion, it is not that he has become a new creature, it is not his faith, it is not his prayers—it is nothing of all this that gives him the courage to believe himself to be a child of God. There is only one thing that gives a sinner the boldness to enter into the sanctuary, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Not a little boldness is required for a sinner to believe that God should want to accept him into fellowship with Himself. And so long as he continues to search in his own heart for something to give him boldness for this, he will not obtain any boldness. But if he looks at the blood that was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, then the boldness will come.

Nothing of my own I bring,
Only Thee, my Paschal Lamb;
Under Thine atonement's wing
Can I take a fearless stand.

IX

The Forgiveness of Sins

Sin! What a sum of affliction, sorrow, and misfortune is included in this word! How much unrest, anxiety, and concern sin has caused! There are, it is true, many who are not troubled because of sin. But this is because they are sleeping. One is not troubled with anxiety when he is asleep. But all who are awake are more or less anxious and uneasy because of sin. It is the wickedness, deep depravity, and evil inclination of our natures which cause the greatest anxiety. There may, it is true, be deep sorrow, grief, and anxiety also because of sinful deeds, words, and thoughts when one is awakened and sees them in the holy light of God's Law. But the greatest and most constant source of anxiety is, however, the evil heart, absence of love to God, lack of fear of God and trust in God, together with a constant inclination to that which is evil. "The heart is deceitful above all things, it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?"

What is to be done with sin? What has been done cannot be undone. The sin which I have committed, that is committed. If I wish ever so much that what has been done might be undone; if I repent ever so much; if I could weep tears of blood, still that which is done will never be undone. And I cannot remodel my evil and deceitful heart. I cannot escape from myself; I cannot get away from being a sinner. And he who sins, he shall die. That is the judgment. The only way out of the difficulty is if God will be gracious unto me and forgive me my sins. And God's Word says, does it not, that God forgives sin, yes, that He is very generous in forgiving, that He will abundantly

pardon, that the Lord is a merciful and gracious God, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth, and that He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin? Therefore the prophet Micah exclaims: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in lovingkindness. He will again have compassion upon us; He will tread our iniquities under foot; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of all the sea." Therefore we find that when any one who was troubled about his sin came to Jesus, He always said to him: "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven." And He told them that the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins.

Yes, all this we know so very well. "But," says many a sinner who has been awakened to anxiety over his sin, "how can I become sure of the forgiveness of my sins? I see in God's Word that God forgives sin, yes, is willing to forgive sin, but how can I know that He has forgiven me my sins?" "Alas," many a one sighs, "Would that I could have lived in the time of Christ, so that I like Nicodemus could have gone to Jesus and spoken to Him privately!" "Or if only I could have been in the place of the man sick of the palsy and have heard Jesus say to me personally: 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Yes, then I could be entirely sure of the forgiveness of my sins, for then I would have a word from God Himself on which to build the assurance of the forgiveness of my sins." "Or if only I might look into the Book of God and assure myself that He really has blotted out of it all my sins! Or if only I could hear a voice in my own heart which clearly and distinctly told me that God had forgiven me my sins. But Jesus walks no more visibly about on earth, so we can speak to Him, and no human eye is permitted to read what is written in the Book of God.

So there doesn't seem to be any way by which one can be sure of the forgiveness of his sins."

"Oh," some may say, "one can feel that one's sins are forgiven." Yes, he thinks he can perceive it, he feels it, and he is so glad and happy; the burden of his sins has been taken away; he is free. But before he realizes it, this feeling is gone, and the joy and peace and freedom are also gone, and he begins to doubt that the feeling he had was to be depended on. Is the sin forgiven, or is it not forgiven? God alone knows. So there he is once more in uncertainty. And so long as he lives in this uncertainty, and constantly hovers between fear and hope, he will have no strength, no boldness, no peace, and no joy. He tries again to work up this feeling in himself, and prays God to give him that sweet sensation again. At times he may feel easier, and so begins again to hope that everything will be better; but then the feeling again disappears, and he sinks back into despondency and dejection, because he cannot be sure of the forgiveness of his sins.

Let us remember the plain and simple truth which we learned in our Catechism, namely, that the forgiveness of sins is something which must be *believed*. "I *believe* in the forgiveness of sins." Isn't that what we learned to say when we as children learned the Third Article? We do not feel the forgiveness of sins. Neither do we "hope" that we shall receive the forgiveness of sins. But we *believe* the forgiveness of sins. And when we say we believe the forgiveness of sins, then we do not mean the same as when we say that we believe we shall have fine weather tomorrow, or that we believe the war will soon be over. The Christian faith, whereby one believes the forgiveness of sins, is not a more or less probable supposition or conjecture, but faith is, as stated in Hebrews, an *assurance* of things hoped for, a *conviction* of things not seen. It is therefore an assurance and conviction of

something which exists, but which I do not see, and which, we may add, I cannot feel.

Let us in the next place notice that what God says we shall believe, that must be equally true whether we believe it or not. It is not our faith which makes truth out of whatever we believe. It is a great error, in which many seem to be ensnared, to suppose that what they believe really comes into existence on account of their faith. No, faith creates nothing; faith only believes what God says. Only that is a Christian faith which builds on the Word of God. I can have no faith about that concerning which God has said nothing. If I am to believe anything with a Christian faith I must have God's Word for it. If, therefore, I am to believe the remission of sins I must have a word from God on which to build this faith, or else my so-called "faith" will be only a loose conjecture or guess-work. But does Scripture say that *my* sin has been forgiven *me?* No. Well, there I am. Yes, and many stand just there, and hence there are so many who constantly live in uncertainty about the forgiveness of their sins,—because they have not learned on what to build the certainty of the forgiveness of their sins.

The forgiveness of sins must never be separated from the redemption of Christ, and must, therefore, never he sought as something separate, but must always be sought in Christ. Therefore Jesus says: "This is my blood which was shed for you for the remission of sins." It was just therefore that Jesus on the cross shed His blood, in order that the remission of sins in this way should be provided. There are many who seem to think that we must influence that heart of God and induce Him to be willing to forgive us our sins. And because it is impossible to find out whether we have done that which ought to be done, prayed fervently enough, believed intensely enough, etc., it is also impossible to become sure that He has forgiven us our

sins; and so we continue to live in uncertainty and insecurity. Something else than prayers and tears and exertion was needed to obtain the remission of sins. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." But Christ shed His blood for the remission of sins, and ever since then the remission of sins has been prepared. The remission of sins is something which we find all ready for us in Christ. Therefore Paul also says: "In whom we have redemption thru His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The redemption of Christ is the remission of sins, according to what Paul says. Redemption consisted in this that Christ procured the remission of sins for us. It was sin and all that goes with it, that He redeemed us from. And this He did not do by taking sin out of the world, nor by doing away with the fact that we are sinners; but He did it in this way that He procured the forgiveness of our sins. The redemption of Christ consists in this. Therefore the Scriptures also teach that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses."

To believe the remission of sins is therefore the same as to believe that Christ has redeemed us. One cannot believe the one without believing the other. We sometimes meet people who say: "I believe that Jesus has redeemed me, but I cannot believe in the forgiveness of sins." Such a saying is a perfect self-contradiction. He who does not believe in the forgiveness of sins does not believe that Christ has redeemed him. And when he says he believes that Christ has redeemed him, but does not believe in the forgiveness of sins, then such an expression shows that he simply does not understand what it means to say that Christ has redeemed him; he does not know what is meant by the word redemption. As before stated, redemption consists in this that the remission of sins has been procured.

When, therefore, I believe the remission of sins I build this belief on a Word from God. I build on the testimony which God has given concerning His Son; I build it on the Gospel of the redemption of Christ. I believe what the Word of God says, namely, that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins; I believe that we in His blood have redemption, that is, the remission of sins.

The remission of sins must therefore be sought and found in Christ, in the redemption of Christ. No other forgiveness is to be found; there is no other forgiveness to be had. I must not delve into my own heart to find the forgiveness of my sins; it is not to be found there. I must not hunt in my heart to try to find something there which shall permit me to believe the forgiveness of my sins; or which shall give me an assurance of the forgiveness of sins; but I must hunt in the Word of God—in the Gospel. There I shall find a firm foundation. I can confidently depend on what God has said; and Christ Himself says in the Gospel that He shed His blood for the remission of sins. The Word of God says that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all, and that we in His blood have the remission of sins. That is something worth building on. This is something quite different from the feelings and moods of the deceitful heart. This is the firm rock which stands when Heaven and earth shall have passed away.

But is not this mixing together things that do not belong together? Is not this mixing together the works of Christ and the works of the Holy Spirit? We read about redemption, do we not, in the Second Article, but about the remission of sins in the Third Article? That is true, and still this is not mixing together things that do not belong together, for there is the closest connection between the Second and Third Articles. It is the work of the Holy Spirit when a man *believes* the forgiveness of sins, and therefore it

comes in the Third Article; but that there is any remission of sins to believe, that is the work of Christ, and comes therefore in the Second Article. The Second Article is the prerequisite to the Third Article. The Holy Spirit could create no faith in us unless the Lord Jesus Christ had procured that which faith grasps. Therefore Jesus said to His disciples that it was expedient for them that He went away, for if He went not away the Comforter would not come; but if He went away then He would send the Spirit who should bear witness of Christ, and declare Christ unto them. It is this that the Holy Spirit does every time a man believes in the forgiveness of his sins; for no man has any other forgiveness to believe in than the one Christ procured when He went away.

But, you may object, when Jesus thru suffering and death went away, He acquired the remission of sins for all people, did He not? And one must after all distinguish between the redemption of Jesus for all and the individual's participation in this salvation. The remission of sins is, after all, something personal which concerns me, and me only. Isn't it true that altho Christ has acquired the remission of sins for all, there still are many persons whose sins are not forgiven? Isn't it true that if I am to have my sins forgiven, God must deal with *me?* God must absolve me, forgive me my sins, or else the redemption of Christ is of no benefit to me. And how can I be sure that God really has absolved me, has forgiven me? In other words: How can I be sure that the remission which Christ has procured for all men has become my personal possession, that I have become a partaker of it? It is just this question that many troubled and sincere seekers can not answer.

It is true that the acquiring is one thing, and participation another thing. It is true there are many persons whose sins are not forgiven, altho Christ has acquired remission for all. But now we must not let

Satan use this truth to obscure another truth, so we see nothing clearly.

Let us turn to Acts 10:43. There we read: "To Him (Christ) bear all the prophets witness, that thru His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins." This passage speaks of *receiving* the remission of sins so that one really possesses the remission of sins; consequently it speaks of really being absolved, of really having one's sins forgiven. And Peter says in this passage that it is the unanimous testimony of all the prophets that everyone who believeth in Him receives the remission of sins. Dear friend, do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe He is the Messiah, the Son of God? Do you believe that He died and rose again? Do you believe He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world? Do you believe He has atoned for the sin of the world? Do you believe we in His blood have redemption, the remission of sins? Do you believe that He shed His blood for the remission of sins? You do believe that, do you not? You do not believe God is a liar when He in the Gospel has testified all this about His Son? You do believe, even tho you like the father of the epileptic boy must cry out: "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." But if you believe this, then you have, according to this passage, the forgiveness of your sins; for it says, does it not, that *everyone* who believes in Him *receives* the remission of sins? There you have a Word from God to prove that your sins have been forgiven. And how do you receive the forgiveness of your sins, according to this Bible passage? By believing in Christ. Everyone that believeth in Him receives the remission of sins. Paul teaches the same in a sermon which he delivered in Antioch in Pisidia, which we read in the 13th Chapter of Acts. There Paul says: "Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that thru this Man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by Him everyone that

believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." Thus we see that the remission of sins is proclaimed, proclaimed in the Gospel, and that everyone who believeth is justified, that "God acquits him of sin and its punishment, and regards him in Christ as if he never had sinned."

But how can it be that faith in Christ has such an effect that sin thereby is forgiven us? It is this way: God has given us His Son. In Him we find all that belongs to our salvation. Our redemption entire and complete is in Christ. He who now believes in Christ receives Christ, accepts Christ, and is made partaker of Christ and all that Christ is and has, including the remission of sins. The remission of sins is not received as something which is given separately. The remission of sins must, as previously stated, never be separated from Christ, and must never be sought except in connection with Christ. He therefore who believes in Christ, or—which is the same thing—by faith accepts Christ, he receives therewith the remission of sins.

When people in the Old Covenant ate the Paschal Lamb they had to eat the *whole* lamb. They could not choose a part of it and leave a part of it (Ex. 12:10). So is it also with Christ, of whom the Paschal Lamb was a type. One cannot accept a part of Christ, and not another part. One cannot by faith accept and possess a part of that which Christ has procured for us, and not accept and possess the other part. One cannot accept redemption and not accept the remission of sins. If you believe in Christ you receive the whole Christ, so that there is absolutely nothing which belongs to your pardon, your sonship, your salvation, your eternal happiness which you then do not receive. Therefore Paul says in Romans, 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" And

therefore the same Apostle says in Cor. 3:21: "For all things are yours." And therefore we read in one of our beautiful hymns:

We have all things, Christ possessing;
Life eternal, second birth;
Present pardon, peace and blessing,
While we tarry here on earth.

We repeat it: so long as we persist in hunting in our own hearts for some kind of feeling or something else, whatever name it may have, on which we can build the assurance of the remission of our sins, just so long do we fail to get assurance. So long as we wait for something to come into our hearts to convince us that now our sins are forgiven, just so long we shall wait in vain. But if we turn our eye away from ourselves and toward Christ, and believe that Word of God which says that Christ has redeemed us, and that we in His blood have redemption, the remission of sins, then we have a firm foundation to stand on. Isn't it enough that Christ has redeemed us? Isn't it enough that Christ has earned the remission of sins for us? We surely don't want any other remission than that which Christ has acquired for us, do we? Verily, it has cost our Savior dearly enough to procure the forgiveness of sins for us. And then we ought to honor Him for what He has done. And then we ought truly to thank Him, and not wound Him with unbelief, in that we go about searching elsewhere to find the remission of sins and peace for our hearts. Remember, we have all in Christ, and that is enough.

And when you find Him,
Then you have found all
That ever your heart can desire.

X

Faith and Feeling

We have said that Christianity is not a religion destitute of feeling. On the contrary, there is no religion that produces so many and such intense feelings in the heart as Christianity. Now, it is true that not all persons are equally emotional; and not all persons show their feelings to the same degree. But surely, it may safely be said that there is not a single adult person who has been converted, and has come into fellowship with God by faith in Jesus, who does not, when he has received grace to believe himself saved for the sake of Jesus Christ alone, experience a great joy and peace in his heart. Especially is this true if he, for some time has been laboring under the Law, has felt himself lost and condemned to eternal death, has striven and struggled to become better, and then only found that he was becoming worse and worse, so he, maybe, was almost driven to despair. When finally his eyes are opened to the fact that he is saved by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, is it strange that such a person becomes overjoyed? Is it strange that when the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, that one becomes like them that dream, that one's mouth is filled with laughter, and one's tongue with singing, as we read in the 126th Psalm? He who thinks that it is strange has no understanding of what it means to get out of the darkness into God's marvelous light, to be delivered from the bondage of sin and the Law and ushered into the glorious liberty of grace and the Gospel. And is it strange if he who has been in the greatest anxiety which can be found in the heart of man, unrest and anguish at being condemned, is it

strange that such a person experiences a peace which passeth all understanding when he sees and knows that he is saved? If that which is written in Rom. 5:1 is true, namely, that we being justified by faith have peace with God thru our Lord Jesus Christ, then peace must come into the heart which believes in Jesus. Such a soul not only knows that peace is made by Christ, but he feels, experiences, and enjoys that peace.

Oh, how my spirit doth rejoice,
Since I my Jesus found.

But it is a common experience of men that no emotion, whether it be a feeling of pain and sorrow or of joy and delight, can endure with the same strength for any length of time. And religious feelings are in this respect not essentially different from other feelings. Another experience common to men is that we are most overcome by emotions when we experience something new. When this new experience is no longer new, but becomes common-place, then the strong emotions vanish. When two young people fall in love and become engaged, this love, to begin with, is attended by very intense feelings; but when they have been married for some time, this feeling passes away. This certainly does not mean that they no longer love each other as much as before; but love expresses itself in another and usually in a more sensible way.

This is also the experience that many newly converted persons have, and is an experience which has caused much anxiety and many conflicts of soul. The person who after many conflicts finds rest in the gracious bosom of Jesus, thinks perhaps like Peter, that it is good to be here, and like Peter desires to build and live there forever. Inexperienced as he is in regard to the conditions of the Christian life he thinks, maybe, that if it is so blessed to be a child of God already in the very beginning, what will it not be when he has made some progress, has grown in grace, and

has had richer experiences! And then perhaps he notices that the delightful and blessed feelings, far from increasing in strength, on the contrary, begin to pass away, that joy decreases, and that peace no longer is undisturbed. He notices also that the sin in his heart is not so completely dead and gone, but on the contrary, evil desires, sinful thoughts, in short, the nature of the old Adam again makes its presence known. He had maybe thought that when the old things had passed away and all had become new he would also get rid of the feeling of evil in his own heart. And in the first great joy and sensation of the new life which he experienced, he felt very little of the nature of the old man. The little he did feel he thought he would entirely overcome as he gradually became stronger in his life with God. And instead he perceives so much, alas, so deplorably much of the old man.

Under such circumstances, many a newly converted soul has become alarmed and terrified. As the blessed feelings disappear, he believes that he is losing life itself; as the feelings of grace disappear, he thinks it is grace itself that he is losing. Or perhaps he begins to doubt that he really had experienced God's saving and converting grace. Maybe it was nothing but a delusion. It is no easy task to wean a child: It cries often and very sorely. But it is necessary for the child; it must get used to living on solid food. Thus it is with the children of God, too, when they are to begin living on the Word. They too mourn. And they exert themselves, often to the limit, to retain the feelings, or to again stir them up in the heart when they have passed away; and when they cannot succeed in that they become so unhappy.

Now, let us reflect a little. When you obtained peace, what was it that brought it? Was it that you felt that the condition of your heart had become as you thought it ought to be? No, it was because now

you could look away from yourself and your own heart, and could look to Jesus, remain standing, as it were, before Jesus, and let your eye rest on Jesus. It was that in spite of what there was in your heart to condemn you, you had received grace to believe that you had the forgiveness of sins, sonship with God, life, and justification, and everything in the atonement of Jesus: that you had access to God by the blood of Jesus, and that this was enough; absolutely nothing else of any kind was needed. You received peace, therefore, by believing in Christ.

Now, when you begin to have misgivings, and there is anxiety and unrest in your heart, what causes this? It is caused by this that you again have forgotten what you thought you had learned, namely, that what you must build on is entirely outside of yourself, and not within your own heart: that you must build on Christ and His atonement, not on what you feel, not on experiences within your heart. Oh, how slow and sluggish we are to learn that we are not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I think I understand so well why Jesus so often had to reprove His disciples because they were so "slow of heart to believe," for this is something which I know from my own experience.

At the time the sinner received grace to believe himself saved he built this faith on the historical fact that Jesus nineteen hundred years ago died for our sins, and on nothing else. Now, isn't the fact that Jesus has redeemed us just as true when we have no blessed feelings as when we are thrilled thru and thru with lovely emotions? Yes. But since it is equally true at all times, then, surely, I can at all times and with the same confidence build the assurance of my salvation and eternal happiness on this truth; and then my feelings have nothing to do with the matter.

It is on the *Word* that I must build my faith,—on the Word which tells of Jesus' finished work of sal-

vation, or else I never will have firm ground to stand on. Feelings shift and change all the time; the heart is deceitful more than all things, and therefore not to be depended on. But that which God has said stands immovably firm; it is just as true and just as dependable today as yesterday. It is perilous to build on one's emotions. They who have not learned to build on the Word, but judge their state of grace by what they feel inwardly, or, in other words, build on their feelings, they must always have some means of intoxication; for only when they are in a state of emotional intoxication are they happy. Their "edification" consists in having their emotions stirred. As stronger and stronger means are required to stir them up, the case becomes quite difficult; for it is simply impossible to live under high pressure all the time. And when finally no stimulant has the desired effect, such people are "burnt out," nothing cuts them to the quick, and often the story ends with their saying good-bye to Church and Christianity. They can tell how they have tried both, and found them to be all humbug.

In Col. 2:6 is written: "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." How did we receive Christ Jesus? As poor, unworthy sinners, who had nothing, and could do nothing, but who learned from the Word of God that Jesus had redeemed us, and who received grace to understand and believe that this was enough. Well, then we must also walk in Him. Our condition will never be different so far as this matter is concerned. Just as we are saved by grace, converted by grace, and justified by grace, so we shall have to live by grace, and at last we shall also be permitted to come home to God by grace only, thru the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Prince of Peace, my faith's beginner,
Thou a Savior, I a sinner,
Thou with Amen, I with prayer;

I Thy everlasting debtor,
Thou the One that broke sin's fetter,
Thou God's own anointed heir.

Therefore we can sing:

I build on this foundation,
On Christ, who died for me,
His wounds are my salvation,
My rest eternally.
He is my life eternal,
Me, worthless worm, He'll take,
He is God's Gift supernal,
God loves me for His sake.

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

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